

# The Gates of Hell

## *Grimoire of Cosmic Entities Volume One*

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Original Concept by Serge W. Desir, Jr.



## Chapter One: Beyond the Gates of Hell

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*The following is an excerpt from the Diary of Drenicus the Wise when he peered through a mirror of the realities during the Age of Greatness.*

*The sky above the great iron bars of the gate is the color of a rotting tomato. A single sun throbs imperiously in the red haze. At apparently random moments, flames explode in the air. Flying silhouettes stalk the sky, wings never flapping, circular courses never wavering. Air, thick with smoke and sulfur, reluctantly offers just enough oxygen. Oppressive heat drives the moisture from the flesh.*

*The landscape beyond the iron edifice is barren discounting the gaping wounds of craters and canyons. Steam and soot hisses from the apertures, casting a gloom in the vision. There are neither trees or grass, nor bushes or vines. Just parched earth. Along the distant horizon, great citadels stab the crimson sky. Sometimes, huge clouds rise from the distant towers. These always retreat quickly into the blood-red place, disappearing from view. On occasion, screams, most not altogether human, tear across the otherwise silent cacophony. This is what can be seen from between the great iron bars of the gate.*

*The gate stretches in either direction for as far as can be seen. Rising precisely ninety-nine feet into the haze, some of the bars are straight and as thick as man's torso, others as small as a child's finger. Intricate, iron-worked designs fill the interior of the gate; supporting bars are covered in evenly spaced barbs and razor-edged wires. In spite of the heat, tendrils of frost drift lazily from the gate. Nothing stands guard.*

*At regular intervals across the gate, written by the twisted iron bars, is a poem. The verse is in a language unknown to all but the oldest beings in the Cosmos. Yet, any that look upon it know what the verse says. Indeed, all in Creation know the words in the depths of their souls:*

I am the way into the doleful place,  
I am the way into eternal grief,  
I am the way to a forsaken race.

Justice it was that moved my great creator;  
Divine omnipotence created me,  
And highest wisdom joined with primal love.

Before me nothing but eternal things  
Were made, and I shall last eternally.  
Abandon every hope, all you who enter.

*As the last words enter my mind, the gate snaps and cries as an opening appears. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I hear someone or something bid me to enter and forever know naught but perdition and sorrow.*

*For that is all one can find beyond The Gates of Hell.*

Hell. Cultures across countless worlds have traditions regarding this place to which the souls of the dead who committed acts of evil are condemned. It is a place of endless torment, often by fire or by ice, in which the damned suffer for eternity. However, within these same traditions are rays of hope for those still living in the world. Mothers warn their children to be good and to obey thereby ensuring they will not be cast into the Lake of Fire. Citizens are encouraged to do well by their neighbors and their government in order to uphold both personal and social integrity. Merchants and rulers are prompted by their peers to be honorable and committed to equity, thereby serving as respectable examples to those beneath them. In accomplishing these things, mortals believe that they are safe from the eternal punishments of Hell.

In the minds of many mortals, Hell is a place of suffering after death. True, many have heard and shared stories

of the devils that inhabit the Stinking Maw. These beings, often regarded as fops easily tricked and foiled by wise clerics or canny wizards, are distant threats. At most, they whisper invisibly in one's ear to commit some evil act. Overcoming the devil is simply an issue of not yielding to temptation and the victory is won. Certainly, devils are monstrous and terrible to behold, but plays and farces reveal that in their horror they are stupid and easily manipulated due to not only the power of goodness, but due to the ingenuity of humanity. Moreover, there is a general belief that only a select few are ever condemned to Hell, on account of the infernally bad luck that devils have in dealings with mortals, the natural conclusion of the paradigms just discussed.

Hell, then, possesses something of an ambivalent position in the minds of most mortals. On the one hand, it is a terrible place to end up, filled with horrific monsters of all sorts. On the other hand, it is a place in which only the

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weak and foolish descend, a place populated by dumb beasts. Indeed, there are more and more mortals who even doubt the existence of a Hell. After all, if there were such a place, it would certainly be more efficient. If there were such a place in a world of magic and divine power, it would have long since overrun the various worlds and the Realms Beyond.

These fools are part of the reason why Hell draws ever closer to victory in the mortal coil.

Hell is very real. Hell is very dangerous. And the devils that inhabit the Nine-fold Realm are very terrible and very intelligent... More so than any other fiend in Creation. It is due to these monstrosities that these contradictions – promoted by the fear and ignorance of mortals – exist. It is because of devils that more and more doubt the threat of Hell.

Hell is the physical manifestation of tyranny, oppression, and military might. While it is a place of physical suffering, more than anything else, it is a place of spiritual torment and pain. Hell seeks not only to scar the body (unless one looks to Phlegethos); Hell seeks to scar, chain, and utterly suffocate the soul. Hell wants all of Creation to buckle under its pressure and to fall into Perdition. Hell seeks to create a sense of meaning in the emptiness of Evil. This, perhaps more than anything else, is what makes Hell so terrible: living a lie while trying to force it upon others because of the wish for others to suffer equally. That is Hell.

Hell is one of the planes of existence among other so-called lower planes or infernal realms, known to most scholars as “The Depths Below.” Joined by Acheron, Gehenna, The Gray Wastes of Despair, Carceri, The Abyss, and Pandemonium, Hell stands as the best known and best catalogued of the infernal realms (with the sole exception of Nessus, which continues to be hidden in darkness). Composed of nine distinct layers, Hell is more completely referred to as The Nine Hells of Perdition. Each layer of Hell, or Perdition, represents some fundamental concept associated with tyrannical, oppressive evil. Each layer is ruled by a near omnipotent master known as a Lord of the Nine. And all of the Lords answer to the pinnacle of Lawful Evil, The Overlord of Hell. These beings and those that serve them are the will of Hell given form, doing all they can to reach out and corrupt the hearts and souls of the Cosmos with the eventual goal of ruling all Creation. Their might is immense, their evil unfathomable. Their servants, devils of all types, are like rats in a hovel, infesting the Cosmos almost unseen although the effects of their presence of palpable. Compromise is not an option. Allowing them to facilitate easily within the world of mortals is not an option. Knowledge of their intent and goals is the only way to begin to understand the threat they reflect. This treatise, compiled by those who have risked more than their lives, offers a glimpse behind the Gates of Hell at the evil that seeks to overwhelm Creation.

*The Gates of Hell* features information on how dangerous Hell and its denizens are. After reviewing and clarifying common concepts about devils, this text will review the nature of magic, relationships with gods, and the mortal fools that dare to worship these creatures. We will then offer a thorough review of the Dark Ministry and other powerful, common devil generals. Then, using recent information gleaned from an unknown yet extremely provocative source, we will study the nobility of Hell. The sections on the Courtiers of Perdition will include information on the Dukes of Hell, arch-devils,

and the lower Lords of the Nine. There continue to be conflicting ideas about the nature of the Lords. Some claim they are not gods, while others claim they are greater than gods. We will clarify the myths and eliminate the misinformation that surrounds the Lords and their status in Hell and beyond. Finally, we will touch on The Lord of Perdition himself, The Overlord of Hell, Asmodeus.

It is imperative that those who read this text do not become enamored with the nature of Hell or its vile denizens. Devils are not to be considered in any manner other than thoroughly and utterly despicable. Devils are not under any circumstances to be trusted or admired; rather they must always be respected and feared. Only the most powerful entities of light can truly hope to overcome the threat these spirits represent. They are a blight on Creation, a manifestation of all that is terrible and unholy. We hope that this information will offer enough information to lead to the end of these repulsive creatures and the ultimate failure of Hell. We all pray to all that is holy and righteous that such a joyous day is not long in coming.

## Devils and Cosmic Entities

The Realms Beyond constitute what are the known so-called “outer planes.” While the Elemental Realities or “inner planes” represent the physical Ideals of matter and substance, the Realms Beyond are the manifestation of Ideals associated with the spirit and concepts. All things that can be believed and thought about are represented in shape, form, and often some kind of sentence in the Realms Beyond. It is within this collection of realities that gods can be found.

The nature of a god is a complex consideration that requires a great deal more space than this treatise is designed to provide. There are dozens of different theories as to what gods are, but for the purpose of *The Gates of Hell*, there are two that are the most likely given based upon our research regarding devils. One theory posits that gods are the manifestation of Ideals and concepts represented by mortals in the Mortal Coil (also known as the “material plane”). According to this position, gods cannot exist but with the existence and, more importantly, the veneration of mortals. A god, while wielding power as far beyond the greatest human as a human wields compared to a normal ant, still depends on humanity’s attention (through adoration or fear).

The second theory, and one that has recently suffered set backs due to the popularity of the previous theory, suggests that gods are eternal entities that exist and give shape to the Ideals in which mortals believe. This position does not require as much attention from mortals; indeed, mortal creatures serve and/or worship gods because they must, ensuring that mortal decent into the afterworld upon death is well received.

It is likely that both of these theories possess a degree of truth. It has become increasingly obvious that gods need mortal veneration in order to survive, but there are numerous worlds in which gods predate mortal worshippers. In fact, there are quite a few worlds in which the gods were not created by mortal thought, but by even greater divine powers typically referred to as “over gods.” In any event, what is important to note is that both theories associate the gods with Ideals in which mortals believe.

Gods are indeed the manifestation of ideals. However, gods are very specific representatives of specific ideals for select groups of mortals often limited to a continent in one world. Thus, in one part of a planet, a god of War may be psychotic deity associated with hatred and flames while in another part of the same world, a god of War is associated with the randomness of violence and the perception that violence is part of everyday life. The distinctions between gods are often more drastic once one studies different gods within different pantheons from different worlds. In essence, most gods are limited in scope and accessibility.

The natural question is if gods are not the ultimate Ideals, but rather specific and decentralized representatives serving as aspects of Ideals, are there beings out there that represent Ideals?

Many myths and legends passed down through numerous mortal generations relate the battles gods faced as they rose to power. Quite a few of these legends tell of divine conflicts between the gods, but just as many tell of how the gods overthrew older creatures who, while not divine, wielded tremendous power capable of threatening the gods. Whether called "Titans" or appearing as eternal "dragons," these beings served as great foes to the gods. In almost all mortal coils, the gods overcame these adversaries and cast them beyond the world, allowing the gods to rule in peace. Although these tales are somewhat fanciful, they hold a bit of truth. There are indeed beings in the Cosmos that can challenge gods although they are not gods. These are cosmic entities.

Cosmic entities are immortal beings that represent Ideals. They are constant, singular beings that exist because a concept or thought exists. They serve only the perpetuation of the concept. Unlike gods, cosmic entities can transcend the limitations of one world, which allows them to enforce their Ideal across all Creation. Cosmic entities are generally older than the gods, having existed before anything else. The oldest and greatest cosmic entities set the foundation for the Ideals that continue to influence every aspect of existence. Indeed, some have claimed that "over gods" are not gods at all, but supremely powerful cosmic entities.

Some cosmic entities are frequently referred to as "planar lords" for it is in the Realities Beyond that cosmic entities continue to hold considerable power. From the heights of Heaven's highest mountain into the eternal spirally madness of Limbo, from the powerful demon princes that rage in madness and evil in The Abyss, to the cerebral Axioms of Law that organize Nirvana, cosmic entities rule the outer planes. Indeed, the so-called "Elemental Gods" are also cosmic entities and it is rumored that concepts like Death and Life are represented by semi-sentient personas that could be classified as cosmic entities.

Cosmic entities differ from gods in a number of ways. For and most importantly, cosmic entities do not require the veneration or worship of mortals to exist. So long as anything, god or mortal, believes, promotes, or supports (and in some cases, opposes) an Ideal, the appropriate cosmic entities will exist. Next, cosmic entities are almost universally barred from direct interaction with the Mortal Coil; although aspects of their being may influence events therein (like fire that seeps into the material plane), cosmic entities cannot enter the Mortal Coil of their own volition. Third, cosmic entities are all but impossible to destroy. While a god, due to lack of wor-

ship, may suffer fluctuations in power and status and eventually "die," such is not the case with a cosmic entity. Only direct conflict with another similarly ranked or greater cosmic or divine being or an extremely powerful artifact can destroy a cosmic entity. Even then, most cosmic entities must be destroyed in their plane and/or layer of origin/power.

In spite of these differences, cosmic entities do have many traits similar to those of gods. While they do not require worship, cosmic entities do benefit from the adoration of lesser creatures. A being that dies serving a cosmic entity may find its soul used as sustenance, bolstering the power of the entity in question. Cosmic entities also can be "ranked" in a manner similar to that of gods. While powerful mortals can easily harm the weakest cosmic entities, not even such puissant mortals offer much of a threat against the strongest cosmic entities who rival divine pantheon heads in their might. Cosmic entities also exhibit abilities and powers far beyond those of the greatest mortals.

So, where do devils fit into this cosmic scheme and are all devils cosmic entities? The answer to the latter question is, "no." Most devils, from the pathetic lemur to the horrific pit fiend, are spirits. Spirits are souls given form and shape, their protoplasmic form condensed into something resembling matter. They are similar to undead in that they are not alive, at least not in the sense that mortal creatures are alive. They do not need to breathe, eat, sleep, or procreate. Spirits exist as proxies to the Ideals they represent. Thus, angels are spirits dedicated to righteousness, sacrifice, and truth. Devils are spirits enslaved to tyranny, malice, and cruelty. Devils that assume the status of Duke of Hell and higher are cosmic entities because at this point such devils are truly unique individuals.

The relationship between gods and cosmic entities is a strained one. While the gods lay legal claim to the Mortal Coil, many cosmic entities, particularly the evil variety, seek to overwhelm all of the Cosmos that they view as their own. More than any other group of cosmic entities, Devils are the most deadly and dedicated to this goal of achieving dominion over all Creation.

## Devils, Gods, and the Prime

There are countless legends and tales about how a powerful wizard gained ultimate power after forcing Mephistopheles to divulge a profound secret. Others tell of how a tyrannical, warrior-king acquired the allegiance of Abigor and his 666 Legions and used them to create a new empire. Some share stories of how Merorem the Darkwind erased a priest's embarrassing past, allowing the clergywoman to take control of a major religion. Still others tell how a purloiner discovered the path to riches after making special arrangements with Scax. In all cases, these tales relate how a Power of Hell played a pivotal role in a mortal's acquisition of greater power; furthermore, in all cases these stories reveal how the mortal came out ahead in the bargain. However, it can be said with no doubt that any time a mortal makes a pact with a devil, the mortal will almost always lose in the end.

Devil summoning has become a staple in worlds across the Cosmos. Indeed, summoning extraplanar creatures is typical of many powerful religions and particularly common among self-styled adventurers and



treasure-seekers. Yet, there are differences between summoning even a creature as strong as a pit fiend and calling on the aid of Duke Carreau. While a pit fiend can often use a planar portal to enter the material plane, most Dukes, arch-devils, and Lord-Regents do not have this capacity. The irony here is the fact that the highest ranking devils wish to enter the Prime with greater frequency since this is the most common way for their kind to gain access to the greatest number of mortal souls which in turns bolsters their power and prestige among their peers. Furthermore, access to more mortals enhances Hell's very clear perspective not just on Evil, but on the nature of Existence; the more mortals and lesser beings are forced to contend with direct and "pure" aspects of organized evil, the more power Hell has within the rest of the Cosmos.

Many are unaware of why devils of cosmic entity status are restricted from traveling without limitation across the Realities. The answer lies in the gods. In most worlds the gods – selfish of their hegemony in the planes and within the mortal realm – pooled their divine might to bar or limit extraplanar travel. Due to arrangements made shortly after Antiquity and the Dawn of the Gods, divine beings gained "legal rights" to the mortal coils, rights that all but stripped cosmic entities of direct contact with mortals. The gods feared that cosmic entities, limitless in their access to numerous worlds, would reap the benefits of veneration and worship, the food of deities. The gods suspected that cosmic entity involvement with the mortal realm would not only rob them of their sustenance, but could catapult cosmic entities back into the roles they held prior to the rise of divine beings.

As is often the case, the gods were correct. Cosmic entities would indeed reap great rewards from mortals if they had the ability to interact with them directly. Unlike gods, who are empowered by veneration, faith, and belief across almost any planar boundary and require worshippers in order to exist in the first place, cosmic entities, while not dependant upon worship to exist, require immediate supplication from lesser beings in order to grow in power. It is for this reason that cosmic entities tend to require fairly simple, yet very intense, rituals from mortal celebrants. The immediate act of belief on the part of a mortal greatly enhances the power of a cosmic entity; mortals, enticed by the clear and obvious power of a cosmic entity, are more likely to fall to their knees and offer their lives and souls to cosmic entities. It is through the use of mortal souls that the greatest distinction between gods and cosmic entities emerge. Gods typically do not consume souls since in doing so they lose access to a worshipper. Indeed, even a dead mortal offers worship in the form of a spirit within the god's realm in a variety of ways (often through eternal, unending praise). However, cosmic entities, even those dedicated to goodness and righteousness, gain much from consuming or at least distilling components from a mortal soul; this explains the voracious pursuit for souls exhibited by devils, demons, and other evil cosmic entities. By consuming enough souls, a cosmic entity can achieve greater power and station, so much so that it could eventually displace a god altogether.

However, the gods know that they cannot keep cosmic entities out entirely. After all, almost every god in some way "borrows" the essence of cosmic entities in the portfolios they represent. Additionally, gods needed servants and allies among the various extraplanar beings in the Realities Beyond. Many gods established treaties

with cosmic entities of similar ethical and moral bend that allowed them access to their immortal servants. Through the "pure" manifestations of the various Ideals, so-called "outsiders" or "elementals," gods can intercede on the behalf of a mortal.

Thus, arcane and divine spellcasters have limited ability to summon beings from the Realities Beyond to perform various tasks, but always for a short period of time and with little real risk to either the summoner or the summoned. In most cases, beings summoned in this fashion are relatively weak compared to the monstrosities that exist in the Realities Beyond. Eventually, however, truly powerful mortals gain access to magic that transcends typical summoning. Some acquire the ability to call extraplanar creatures of significant, although not cosmic, power to their worlds; while divine spellcasters of great faith have the ability to forge alliances with such creatures as representatives of their gods, arcane spellcasters of great skill learn how to bind extraplanar creatures to their will. Such alliances and bindings call for great knowledge on the part of the caster and can reach a high pinnacle of extraplanar power. Eventually, some spellcasters transcend even this plateau and move on the greatest form of "mundane" summoning: *gate*.

Upon gaining access to *gate*, mortals risks ripping the fabric of magicks that bar cosmic entities from interacting with the Mortal Coil. At this point creatures like solars and balors can be invited into mortal reality. Such creatures, among the greatest in the Realities Beyond, can have far reaching impact in the Mortal Coil. Indeed, so potent is this magic that specific creatures may be called and the especially brave summoner can even attempt an audience with a cosmic entity or god. But even the *gate* spell, with its tremendous reach, cannot breach planar boundaries and/or divine decree enough to allow cosmic entities (and in some worlds gods as well) access to the mortal realms.

The ability to summon cosmic entities requires tremendous power... and either a degree of desperation or a lack of wisdom. Summoning a cosmic entity of any kind not only carries risks to the summoner, but to an entire world because, once summoned, the presence of a cosmic entity unravels the reality of the mortal realms. Although devils are purveyors of order, even they corrupt the world in which they have no business existing. Greater threat lies in the fact that once a Power of Hell is summoned to the Mortal Coil, most conjurers are ill-prepared for their power or the effects the Power's presence will have on the surrounding environment and lives. However, most conjurers arrogant, desperate, or foolish enough to summon a Duke, arch-devil, or Lord are not overly concerned about the peripheral or long-term effects of their actions and it is for this reason that no one to date as discovered the means to successfully create an incantation or spell that guarantees 100% success.

## The Presence of Hell

The summoning of devils results in a variety of effects on the surround land, none of them beneficial. Of course, different devils institute different reactions when in the Mortal Coil. In spite of these differences, all devils, even those beyond the bounds of Hell's Hierarchy, promote the will of Hell by reinforcing attitudes and concepts typical of Lawful Evil. And, in the case of the Courtiers of Perdition, a bit of Hell truly enters into the

### Mortal Coil.

When common devils are summoned into the material plane, the vast majority are summoned for a very brief period of time by spellcasters or by potent magic items to provide some kind of service. Most familiar with this kind of monster summoning typically expect such a spell to be used in combat. However, a fair number of conjurers will bring devils into the mortal realm for other tasks including transportation, information gathering, and physical labor. Common devils summoned in this manner typically have little time to cause much strife in the world they have been dragged into and, realizing this, generally do whatever service is asked of them quickly and efficiently. The vast majority of such devils have established arrangements with Lawful Evil and/or Neutral Evil gods who grant them special boons for promoting Lawful Evil acts during their short stays so long as they do nothing to bring harm to the caster. As a result, this method of summoning has the least impact on the world-at-large and next to no risk to the conjuror.

The behavior of an allied or bound devil is markedly different from that of a summoned devil. The allied devil is typically a servant of a god or some other cosmic or divine patron of a divine spellcaster and, unless the conjuror behaves in a manner grossly out of bounds in the eyes of his god, the devil will usually serve the divine spellcaster to the best of its ability (of course, this does not preclude the devil attempting to aggrandize itself). Many extremely powerful clerics have potent allies among the likes of cornugons and gelugons, relying on these entities for advice and in combat; while such conjurers do not go so far as to trust their diabolical allies, they do everything in their power to ensure their satisfaction with their role in the Prime. Indeed, many such clerics and divine spellcasters are virtually human devils and engage in acts of cruelty and evil rivaling that of their diabolical allies.

Such an amiable relationship does not exist between most arcane casters and bound devils. When a devil is bound to the material plane, such an affront is enough to

ensure that the devil will do everything in its power to avenge itself against the mortal that dared chain it. Such devils, particularly those of osyluth rank and higher, are adept in not only tearing down the binds that hold them, but in following everything but the intent of the demands made by mortal conjurers. In most cases, if a devil manages to free itself from a binding, it will attempt to scare the wits from its tormentor, promising a terrible price for the humiliation it suffered before returning to Hell to begin carrying out its promise. Only rarely does the devil immediately seek to rend the conjuror limb from limb (some devils are more prone to violence than others in this regard).

For both alliances and bindings, devils begin to threaten the world at large. This is especially true in an alliance. The devil is not only a willing participant in whatever malice in which its mortal partner partakes, it also has a great deal of personal authority to do as it wishes. Such devils can turn an entire town into a terrible state within a few short hours with strategic use of enchantment and illusion magicks.

As mentioned earlier, the *gate* spell clearly outstrips the power of the various monster summons, alliances, and bindings. This one spell can bring dozens or more devils into the material plane at one time. And these devils in turn (like allied and bound devils) can summon even more allies. Within an hour, a battalion of devils can be on an unsuspecting mortal coil, bringing untold woe to the surroundings. Even beings as powerful as a member of the Dark Ministry can be called to the material plane by a *gate*. However, *gates* are limited in that they cannot be used to call Dukes of Hell and higher ranked Courtiers of Perdition. Magic far outstripping even the *gate* spell is required for such a feat (see Chapter Two: Forbidden Magic). However, when a devil – be it a common devil or a noble devil – is called into the Mortal Coil, its presence is guaranteed to have an adverse impact on the world.

The effect caused by a devil called to the Mortal Coil, known by most as a “spiritual wound,” depends on the

## Hell of a Time

As a place of law and structure, Hell is bound within the confines of Time. Although devils are immortal beings, Time is still of great interest to them. Time is the basis upon which many of Hell’s greatest plots and most vile desires are determined. Thus, devils record history (although some would call it propaganda) with a dedication unparalleled by any mortal race. Of course, some of the events that have marked Hell’s history are more renown than others which often presents a skewed image of how the Hell known to the Cosmos today came into being. Below is a brief, extremely simplified timeline of Hell recounting some of the better known events. Of course, dates are not given since it is virtually impossible for even all but the oldest gods to know how long ago things like the Breaking of the Circle occurred.



**The Circle of Three:** Forged during the Time Before Time, the Circle of Three was composed of the three-tiered being of Law. The Supreme Virtue represented justice and mercy. Like a beacon of gold and silver, she existed on the external portion of the Circle. The center of the Circle was darkness, black and violet. Here dwelt The Overlord, the oppressor and tyrant. Bound between the darkness and the light was the gray, personified by The Progenitor, he who provided order and stability. The Circle of Three, bound together in a common cause, defined the laws of the Cosmos, drove away Chaos, and sought to define the Center of All Things.



**Fall of The Overlord:** In its bid to define the Center, the Circle game to odds. Each aspect wished for its moral center to establish hegemony. A great struggle ensued and the Circle shattered. The Supreme Virtue was pulled into the Realms Above where her blood formed the Silver Sea and her tears countless angels. The Progenitor slammed into the Realms of Balance where his shattered body created the cogs of Nirvana and his broken mind the various beings of Order. The Overlord plummeted into the Depths Below, his passing creating the Nine Hells of Perdition and his blood the earliest devils. Thus, did the Circle break and its components become eternal foes.



kind of devil. The following lists the different wounds and associated symptoms that infect a certain radius extending from the point in which the devil was called. The wounds can be avoided only when a *magic circle against evil* is used to call the devil, its power focused inwards; this works only with alliances and bindings, and never with *gates*, incantations, or epic spells. Consider the material on common devils as variant rules while the material on Dukes of Hell, arch-devils, and Lords of the Nine is always applicable when such beings are called to the mortal realms.

## Variant Rule: Called Devils

When a common devil (any devil ranked from lemur to pit fiend status regardless of HD or class levels) is called to the Mortal Coil through *planar ally* and *planar binding* spells, *gate*, or other means, its presence upsets the balance of life. The area in which the devil was called in suffers a severe spiritual wound that can last months with the possibility of permanent scars. The symptoms of the wound radiate the point of the devil's entry into the prime and remains in that place for a specified length of time. Once the devil leaves the area, it does not transport the malady (although some of the more powerful devils may cast spell-like abilities that mimic the following effects). When multiple devils are called, the highest ranking devil dictates the nature of the wound.

- **Least Devil (lemures, nupperibos, spinagons, and other devils with a base HD of 5 or less):** A small amount of infernal energy constantly seeps from the wound, radiating in a ten foot diameter. Animals, magical beasts, and plants will not enter the area (trained mounts, animal companions, and the like are exempt from this). Vermin, particularly roaches and

rats, are 20% more likely to infest the area. All non-Lawful Evil fey, giants, humanoids, monstrous humanoids, and outsiders that enter the radius suffer the effects of *doom*, while all other non-Lawful Evil beings not previously listed suffer the effects of *bane*. Any unattended, inanimate material in the area suffers one point of hardness damage per week. The wound caused by the calling of a least devil lasts for nine days unless *protection from evil* is cast at the point of origin. Indeed, unless *protection from evil* or greater magic like *consecrate* or *hallow* is cast, the area is permanently soiled, radiating faint evil and stunting the growth of non-sentient plant-life even after the wound heals.

- **Lesser Devil (bezekira, barbaz, erinyes, hamatula, kocrachon, kyton, narzugons, osyluth, squamugon, and other devils with a base HD between 6 and 12. For the purposes of this rule, malebranche are included here as well):** A moderate amount of infernal energy constantly seeps from the wound, radiating out as a *desecrate* spell by a caster level equal to the devil's HD. The *desecrate* lasts for nine days. Animals, magical beasts, and plants will not enter the area; trained mounts, animal companions, and similar creature with fewer HD than the called devil must succeed a Will save equal to  $10 + \frac{1}{2}$  the devil's HD + the devil's Charisma modifier to enter the area. Vermin, particularly roaches and rats, are 25% more likely to infest the area. In addition to the effects of the *desecrate*, all non-Lawful Evil fey, giants, humanoids, monstrous humanoids, and outsiders that enter the radius suffer the effects of *doom*, while all other non-Lawful Evil beings not previously listed suffer the effects of *bane*. These latter symptoms last for 18 days. Any unattended, inanimate material in the area suffers two points of hardness damage per week for 18 days. The air in

## Hell of a Time (Continued)



**Rise of the Maleficareim and Pit Fiends:** From The Overlord's blood were formed the first devils. These Children of the Devil, the maleficareim, were godlings in their own right. Each sought to cast down his brethren in favor of his own tyranny. When The Overlord, after a slumber of countless lifetimes, awoke he watched his children and decided to show them the meaning of true power. He created an avatar named Lucifer the Satan and destroyed most of the maleficareim. Of those that survived, the eight greatest were assigned dominion over one of Hell's Perditions under the will of The Overlord. These eight, Astaroth, Dispat, Mammon, Adrammelek, Leviathan, Lilith, Sammael, and Mephistopheles became the original Lords of the Nine Perditions. Others, like Merorem and Haagenti, were either consumed in the early politics of Hell or were exiled. Finally, to reveal his power to his servants, The Overlord created the pit fiends and all the lesser devils.



**Dawn of the Gods:** Across Creation, the gods came into being. Some were created by overpowers of singular worlds, while others emerged from Chaos. In any event, the gods turned away from the Realities Beyond and concentrated on the Mortal Coils wherein mortals were slowly appearing. The Overlord foresees the seeds for his future and begins plotting to corrupt both gods and mortals; much of his success is carried out by Lilith, the Lord of the Sixth. The *Blood War*, although not particularly important to the Lords of the Nine, begins.



**Days of Antiquity:** Through his avatar Lucifer, The Overlord contests the gods whose hold on the Material Plane strengthens. Countless battles between the gods and cosmic entities ensue, but in the end the gods win the bulk of the battles. It is at this time that the Voyeurs fall into Hell.



**Wars of Light and Greed:** Knowing that many gods and their mortal servants were seeking answers to ancient truths, The Overlord decides to further conceal his secret existence. Hoping to ensure that none ever learn the truth of his identity, The Overlord stages a coup between Lucifer and a new avatar called Asmodeus. This civil war in Hell ends when Lucifer is cast down. Asmodeus becomes the new Lord of the Nine. Astaroth is cast out of Hell, his name changed to Gargauth. Tiamat, a draconic being, is given Lordship of Avernus.



the area is either uncomfortably hot or uncomfortably cold (for osyluths only), but not to the point of causing harm. *Desecrate* spells cast in the area function at double area of effect, while the casting time for *unhallow* is halved. The wound caused by the calling of a lesser devil lasts for 18 days unless *consecrate* or *hallow* is cast at the point of origin by a good-aligned cleric with a caster level equal to the devil's HD. Indeed, unless *consecrate* or *hallow* is cast, the area is permanently soiled, radiating moderate evil and stopping the growth of non-sentient plant-life even after the wound heals.

- **Greater Devil (barregon, cornugon, gelugon, pit fiend or other devils with a base HD greater than 13):** A significant amount of infernal energy constantly seeps from the wound, radiating out as an *unhallow* spell by a caster level equal to the devil's HD; the devil can determine upon its arrival the nature of the associated spell effect. The *unhallow* lasts for 27 days. Animals, magical beasts, and plants will not enter the area; trained mounts, animal companions, and similar creature with fewer HD than the called devil must succeed a Will save equal to  $10 + \frac{1}{2}$  the devil's HD + the devil's Charisma modifier to enter the area. Vermin, particularly roaches and rats, are guaranteed to infest the area. Any unattended, inanimate material in the area suffers two points of hardness damage per week for 27 days. It is not unusual to find the area in which a greater devil was called dilapidated and covered in cracks and other kinds of damage. The air in the area is either uncomfortably hot, humid (for barregons), or cold (for gelugons), but not to the point of causing harm. The wound caused by the calling of a greater devil can be purged by the casting of two *hallow* spells at the point of origin by a good-aligned cleric with a caster level equal to the

devil's HD. Indeed, unless *consecrate* or *hallow* is cast, the area is permanently scarred, radiating strong evil and killing any non-sentient plant-life that remains in the area for more than 30 minutes even after the wound heals.

### Dukes of Hell in the Prime

As a Courtier of Perdition, a Duke of Hell cannot be summoned or called to the material plane by mundane means as described in the *Player's Handbook*. Not even a *gate* spell can reach a Duke since the nature of the magic, as decreed by the gods, is limited. However, through powerful incantations and epic spells known as Forbidden Magic (see Chapter Two), a Duke of Hell can not only communicate with those in the Mortal Coil, but can also be given the necessary power to breach the wards that envelope and protect the world from its presence. Once the Duke is brought into the material plane, its presence begins to unravel the natural order as the presence of Hell imposes its unique and oppressive qualities to the unsuspecting world at large. Even after the Duke departs, the wound the world suffers remains for no less than nine months (and this period can be extended if a Lawful Evil divine caster *unhallows* the area before the nine month period concludes). The area affected extends 900 feet from the place in which the Duke appeared. It may engulf an entire edifice, bubble onto the surface, and even affect towns and cities if a summons was cast close enough. It is unknown if a Duke of Hell has the power to mask its appearance in the Prime, but it is considered unlikely.

In addition to the effects described for greater devils, the following are the typical means by which a Duke's presence wounds the world:

### Hell of a Time (Continued)



**The Great Fall:** Evil, in the guise of pride and self-righteousness, taints the Realms Above. In a spectacular purging, thousands of angels fall from grace. This *Great Fall* results in the likes of Astarte, Belial, Eblis, Moloch, and Beelzebub – great angels all – being cast into Hell. While most of The Fallen do not officially join with fiends, some of the greatest do. Hell's Hierarchy is affected by *The Fall* with Adrammelek, Lilith, and Sammael being overthrown by the fallen angels Belial, Moloch, and Beelzebub. It is also during this general time that Leviathan, Lord of the Fifth, is imprisoned in ice by Asmodeus; he is replaced by Geryon.



**Classic Perdition:** This is the longest period of time in which most mortals have had to deal with Hell. The traditional Lords of the Nine rule Hell during this time. These include Tiamat, Dispat, Mammon, Belial, Geryon, Moloch, Beelzebub, and Mephistopheles. Towards the end of this long period, Tiamat abdicates her rule of Avernus after centuries of conflict with Astarte. Astarte becomes Lord of the First. The Lords become divided along "racial" lines. The Fallen (Astarte, Belial, Moloch, and Beelzebub) battle against the Devils True (Dispat, Mammon, Geryon, and Mephistopheles) to determine the direction of tyranny in the Cosmos. Most of the conflict is subtle, but full battles do occur.



**Dies Irae:** In a desire to restructure Hell again, pave the way for future plots, and remind his vassals who defines Evil in all Creation, Asmodeus instigates a great civil war. Eventually, the two factions do battle in Nessus at the foot of Malsheem near the Pit of Darkness. There, the Lords of the Nine battle each other while their armies watch. At a critical moment, Geryon – revealing his loyalty to Asmodeus – blows his horn. The Lords are stripped of their powers and defeated by their greatest generals. Asmodeus punishes all of the Lords, but reinstates most of their powers and duties soon after. Moloch is cast out for his stupidity and is replaced by Lilith. Geryon is cast out for his loyalty and is replaced by Leviathan. The pit fiend generals that remained loyal to Asmodeus become the first Dark Ministers. Shortly after *The Days of Wrath*, Astarte is overthrown by her general Bael.



**The Gathering Darkness:** The fanciful term for the current age, *The Gathering Darkness* heralds tremendous changes. The goals of The Overlord remain as inscrutable as ever and the hunger to rule personified by the Lords of the Nine knows no bounds.

- Common devils *summoned* in the area of the spiritual wound remain in the Mortal Coil for double duration. Attempts to bind common devils in the area of the spiritual wound suffer a -3 caster level penalty.
- Evil and Lawful spells function at +3 caster level.
- Attempts to cast future summons of a Courtier of Perdition in the area receives a +3 bonus.
- Fire-based damage deals an additional point of damage per die (a Duke of Hell associated with another element may affect said element instead of fire).
- Undead created in the area acquire an additional hit point per die. Lawful Evil creatures within one mile are drawn to the spiritual wound.
- Mortal beings that die in the area have a 50% chance to rise within nine days as wights.
- Good aligned beings of all kinds save elementals and outsiders suffer 1d4 points of sanity damage every three days spent in the area.
- The weather in the area is noticeably extreme in the area, but based upon the time of year (i.e., the area of the spiritual wound in the summer is extremely hot while the same area would be extremely cold during the winter).

## Arch-Devils in the Prime

The terrible arch-devil far outstrips the Duke of Hell in its effect on the Material Plane. The upheaval the presence of such a being causes to the Mortal Coil is immense and is usually enough for nearby civilizations to call on the powers of the gods and their allies to exorcise and cleanse the area. The spiritual wound of an arch-devil extends one mile from the original point of summons.

- Common devils summoned in the area of the spiritual wound remain in the Mortal Coil for triple duration. Attempts to bind common devils in the area of the spiritual wound suffer a -6 caster level penalty.
- Evil and Lawful spells function at +6 caster level.
- Attempts to cast future summons of a Courtier of Perdition in the area receives a +6 bonus.
- Fire-based damage is treated as if empowered (an arch-devil associated with another element may affect said element instead of fire).
- Undead created in the area acquire three additional hit points per die. Lawful Evil creatures within six miles of the wound's periphery are drawn to the spiritual wound; such creatures receive an additional hit point

per die once having laired in the area for three consecutive months.

- Mortal beings that die in the area have a 40% chance to rise as wights, a 25% chance to rise as wraiths, and a 10% chance to rise as specters within 6 days.
- Good aligned beings of all kinds save elementals and outsiders suffer 1d6 points of sanity damage every day spent in the area. Sleeping in the spiritual wound requires a Will save = 10 + ½ the devil's HD + the devil's Charisma modifier to avoid a *nightmare*.
- The weather in the area is extreme in the area based upon the time of year (i.e., the area of the spiritual wound in the summer is dangerously hot while the same area would suffer frost conditions during the winter).

## The Lords of the Nine and the Prime

Any being powerful and insane enough to summon a Lord of the Nine into the Mortal Coil is either worthy of great fear and respect or more than deserving of the fate that a Lord is almost guaranteed to deliver upon it. Summoning a Lord of the Nine is a feat that has been accomplished only a few times. In every known case, such an act ensured not just the devastation of entire cities, but often spells the doom of kingdoms. A Lord of the Nine has the power to mask its arrival in the material plane and most legends point to a Lord doing this very thing. Once a Lord appears, it is guaranteed to draw the anger of the gods against Hell and this would guarantee the wrath of Asmodeus himself. Still, a Lord often cannot help but leave something behind and often will affect the wound as a either an arch-devil or a Duke of Hell. The maladies associated with the spiritual wound caused by a Lord of the Nine extends for one mile per the Lord's cosmic rank.

- Common devils summoned in the area of the spiritual wound remain until their physical forms are destroyed, effectively ending the summons. However, since they were not called, they are not subject to demotion or to a period of time restricted from the Mortal Coil. It is impossible to bind or otherwise force a devil to anything in a the spiritual wound (unless one is a higher ranking devil)
- Evil and Lawful spells function at +9 caster level.
- Attempts to cast future summons of a Courtier of Perdition in the area receives a +9 bonus.
- Fire-based damage is treated as if maximized (Mephistopheles affects only cold and Leviathan affects

## Summoning and Calling



The differences between *summoning* and *calling* are extremely important where devils and other outsiders are concerned. *Summoning* is usually a temporary effect that brings an outsider to the Prime Material, but does not allow it to be truly harmed while serving whatever request made by the summoner. As a result, *summoning* a devil does not bring with it the same adverse effects as a call since a *summoned* devil is not entirely on the material plane. If a summoned devil is "killed," it simply returns to Hell uninjured and capable of returning at a later time if another *summon monster* spell is cast. *Calls*, however, bring the actual devil in its entirety to the Mortal Coil. This severe breach of divine decree severely warps the material plane. **Fortunately**, such a devil can be injured and its physical form even destroyed, causing its spirit to return to Hell in anguish and pain. **See Chapter Four: Devils for Dicefreaks for more information on Fiendish Oblivion.**



- fects only water/acid)
- Undead created in the area acquire maximum hit points per die. Lawful Evil creatures within nine miles of the wound's periphery are drawn to the spiritual wound; such creatures receive three additional hit points per die once having laired in the area for one month.
- Mortal beings that die in the area have a 30% chance to rise wights, a 30% chance to rise as wraiths, a 30% chance to rise as specters, and a 10% chance to rise as ghosts within 3 days.
- Good aligned beings of all kinds save elementals and outsiders suffer 1d10 points of sanity damage every nine hours spent in the area. Sleeping in the spiritual wound guarantees a *nightmare*.
- The weather in the area is extreme and dismal in the area based upon the time of year. Such weather causes 1d4 points of subdual damage each turn while exposed.

In all cases, higher ranking devils trump in terms of their power. Thus, if a cardinal of Asmodeus cast *incantation of the Pit* and brought Merorem the Darkwind into the world, the spiritual wound would be established. Only summoning a more powerful arch-devil or a Lord of the Nine in the area would cause the spiritual wound to be adjusted.

Finally, these rules do not assume the impact summoning Asmodeus would have. Such an act would ensure damage well beyond that of the other Lords of the Nine.

## Devils and Other Fiends

For the past few millennia, a debate has raged as to the nature of the premier fiends of Creation, devils. The epitome of organized, logical, merciless evil, devils are feared across the Cosmos by all manner of life, from the lowest of sentient beings to the powers themselves. This fear of devils is far greater than that associated with the other fiend "races."

The demons of The Abyss may be more physically threatening than their eternal foes, but their plans possess none of the foresight and long reaching damnation that characterizes the devils'. This does not mean that demons are not as intelligent or evil as devils. The nature of Abyssal evil, dedicated to Chaos and the unexpected, pointless misery of existence, does not require planning or logic in its execution. Although this meaningless evil is horrific to many (particularly Lawful beings), there is a measure of comfort in that, ultimately, there is no guiding force behind such evil; therefore, there is no overarching goal in the long run. This idea can be supported by the manner in which demons "govern" themselves (the idea of government on The Abyss is truly antithetical to the plane's very nature). There is no one demon prince that rules over all of the others. The balors, paramount of the non-god-like demonic entities, function as gang-lords, fighting with rival balors and greater demons rather than uniting their strengths against their diabolical rivals and the remainder of Creation. The acts of evil and violence of a balor are, as a whole, random and sudden when compared to the millennia-spanning plotting of a squamugon. Does this make demons any less threatening? Certainly not in the immediate sense. These spirits are extremely destructive and vicious, destroying and

killing without provocation or forethought. Sometimes, this is part of a greater intent; however, such is usually not the case. Their numbers are apparently infinite and demons often appear to be more intuitive and capable of working beyond perceived boundaries than comparable devils. Yet for all the destruction they can cause, demons' evil simply pales in comparison to the sinister and deadly designs of their Hellish rivals.

The daemons are often compared to devils as beings dedicated to intrigue and plotting. To be sure, the daemons, for hundreds of thousands of eons, have schemed to bring the denizens of the Depths Below to their knees under the leadership of Gehenna. This plotting almost worked with the Maeldur Et Kavurik, a being the daemons claim to have created. Supposedly, this monster granted the ability for the three fiend "races" to *teleport* across Creation; when the daemons stripped the Maeldur Et Kavurik of its power, many fiends temporarily lost their ability to *teleport* at will. Additionally, the daemons also are said to have created the four "races" of fiends as some grand study of the nature of evil. For a time, these tales were the leading theories on the origin and history of the fiends. They also happen to be totally and utterly false. For all their strength and dedication to pure evil, daemons have inherent flaws which will forever render them less threatening than devils. Certainly, they are more subtle than demons. Certainly, they are more shadowy than even devils. Without a doubt, they are consummate liars gifted with the ability to persuade others – even themselves – that the lies they perpetuate are truths. In this sense, they could be considered more dangerous than devils. Many scholars suspect that if daemons constructed a lie both massive and ingenious enough in which the entire Cosmos believed they would eventually come to rule Creation. After all, Belief is Power. Unfortunately for the daemons, not only are they liars but backbiters as well. Unlike demons, who engage in regular and bloody civil wars, the daemons constantly challenge each other's lies with more lies. They are loath to allow another of their kind to rise to the pinnacle of power. There are a few god-like daemons in the Depths Below, but these entities are not capable of uniting more than a handful of their race. These challenges eternally blunt their evil and prevent daemons from achieving their optimum potential.

Then there are the gehreleths, better known as demodands. These creatures generally do not fight among themselves, but instead spend their energies killing daemons and other trespassers on their lands, as well as worshipping their god, Apomps. These pathetic beings are hardly worthy of the term "fiend", as their evil is petty and confined.

Devils, in the end, prove to be the most deadly of the four fiend "races." Unlike demons, devils are not interested in immediate gratification. Unless necessity dictates otherwise, devils typically will not simply kill an opponent. More often than not, they are not interested just in the death of their adversaries, but in their eternal damnation and loss of faith. Unlike the daemons, who lie as a matter of course, devils lie only when the truth is not more useful. Even then, they rarely lie in the entirety since lies have a nasty habit of backfiring and ruining carefully formulated plots. No, devils are more interested in manipulating fools with just enough truth and the right amount of hyperbole in order to lead them down the path of evil. Devils are logical and organized. Though they possess smaller numbers than both demons



and daemons, devils continue to hold their own in *The Blood War*. Notwithstanding the countless battles they have lost, the percentage of diabolical losses is significantly less than those of the demon hordes or daemon mercenaries. Most terrifying of all, devils have rationalized their evil. There is a reason for everything they do, and they are more than capable of justifying their positions to any and all, even mighty solars (as history has shown on several occasions). Their evil is also guided by a governing force, an intellectual center. For millennia, it was believed that this force was the Dark Ministry, the supreme generals of the Legions of Hell. Then, it was thought that singular entities, the Lords of the Nine, ruled all devils as a grand council. It is now known that the Lords of the Nine in truth answer to The Lord of the Nine, The Overlord of Hell, Asmodeus. This being, the apex of all that is Lawful Evil, is the overall guiding force of rational and organized evil in Creation. Greater in power than any of the demon princes or the various Nether Fiends, this entity is feared by all who are aware of its true power.

There can be no doubt that devils are the most dangerous of the fiends. Their logical and formulated explanation of their evil, their ability to work together, and their ultimate leader, all contribute to their being the preeminent threat in the Cosmos. The remainder of this treatise will touch briefly on the various types or stations of devils.

## The Stratification of Power

Most scholars divide the devils into three categories: least, lesser, and greater. Since it is probable that most of the individuals reading this text are familiar enough with devils to know which entities represent each category, we will not delve into the specifics. However, it is quite clear that this is an inaccurate stratification. This classification system suggests that all pit fiends, including the Dark Ministry, are the epitome of the greater devil strata. This is not the case. Additionally, this does not take into consideration the Courtiers of Perdition.

A more accurate stratification for devils is one that does adhere to the Rule of Three. There are the common devils. This would include the three generic categories of least, lesser, and greater. Even the Dark Ministry is included in this category. Despite their physical and political power, the members of the Dark Ministry are still considered "normal" devils by the powers that control Hell. They would be comparable to extremely powerful and resourceful knights or generals of many material plane worlds who, while maintaining land and a great deal of power, are not part of the nobility. There are also other pit fiends on this level of power. It should be noted that what most scholars assume to be the "common" powers of pit fiends are but those first manifested during the earliest years of a pit fiend's existence. Over the millennia, this epitome of the common devil grows in power, with its reality altering arcana and vast resources to aid it. Some become extremely proficient warriors while others concentrate in "learned magic." All eventually exhibit additional special abilities. Although never a member of the Dark Ministry, it is extremely likely that the current Lord of the First, Bael the Warlord, was one such pit fiend. The pit fiend Gazra, who commands the security forces of the first four levels of Hell from Phlegethos, and the pit fiend Ariyan who

governs the city of Tantlin in Stygia, are other examples of pit fiends close to, if not equal to, the power of the Dark Ministry. And, legends persist of a pit fiend so powerful as to rival the might of the greatest Dukes of Hell or arch-devils: Aesmadeva, Executioner of Hell. In terms of comparative might, such pit fiends tend to be equal in strength to the weakest hero-deities in the Cosmos. They are capable of slaughtering entire armies of demons (and certainly, mortals) on their own and have the power to challenge even entities like solars. However, they are *not* divine in any sense. They cannot grant spells, nor do they generate avatars. They are simply extremely old and powerful devils.

The 81 Dukes of Hell are the lowest members of the second strata of devils, the nobility. In many cases, these Courtiers were once pit fiends who, due to their ingenuity, bravery, or luck, were tapped either by another Courtier, an arch-devil, or a Lord of the Nine, to join this august and extremely selective rank. There are also a fair number of fallen angels and exceptional mortals within this station. There is no such thing as being born into the Courts of Perdition. Since devils do not procreate among themselves, there is no hereditary lineage to follow. However, once a devil joins the Court, it is all but impossible for these entities to be removed for anything less than treachery. The Dukes are often physically and politically more powerful than the Dark Ministry and are just short of possessing cosmic or divine power. The Dukes enact the will of the arch-devil or Lord they serve, but all have their own goals and agendas. Despite their political power, the Dukes still compete with the generals of the common devils for resources. The Dukes maintain their own armies of devils that serve the direct wills of the Courts and the Lords of the Nine. These forces are insignificant when compared with even the smallest standing battalions under the Dark Ministry, but they are still far larger than the greatest of mortal armies. Not all of these armies are militant in nature. Some focus on corrupting mortals or destroying bulwarks of Chaos. Whatever their purpose, a Duke's forces carry out their tasks with a brutal efficiency, to garner power and prestige for the noble.

Next among the noble devils are the arch-devils. These devils, of which there are at least 27, occupy a peculiar station. While they out-strip the Dukes of Hell in terms of sheer power, the majority of them have no "legal" rights in Hell. Many arch-devils are outcasts among the diabolical and only a few live in Hell. Most tremendously fear and hate Asmodeus, whom they blame for their station, and all await the day they can avenge themselves against their master. Like the Dukes of Hell, most arch-devils maintain armies, but most of these are comprised of beings other than devils. Although outcasts, all arch-devils serve the will of Hell (witlessly in some cases) and all pay homage to Asmodeus if called before the Serpent's Throne. A fair number of arch-devils are fallen angels, and a few are rogue formians and modrons. At least six arch-devils are former Lords of the Nine (Adremalech, Astarte, Geryon, Moloch, Sammael, and Tiamat). Four arch-devils, Glasya the Princess of Hell, Lixer the Prince of Hell, Merorem the Prince of the Powers of the Air, and Fierana co-ruler of the Fourth Hell, are publicly part of the Hellish hierarchy.

Then there are the enigmatic Lords of the Nine. Interestingly enough, eight of the Lords of the Nine are considered members of Hell's nobility. These beings are *not*

gods, at least not in the traditional sense. However, they are and must be ranked similarly to the gods because of the grotesque amount of power they wield. The Lords of the Nine are true cosmic entities. The Warlord of Avernus, Bael, is the weakest of the eight and ranks with a lesser god. The Arch Duke of Dis, Dispat; the Arch Duke of Minauros, Mammon; the Arch Duke of Phlegethos, Belial; the Prince of Stygia, Leviathan; and the Queen of Malbolge, Lilith, are all equivalent to intermediate gods. Greatest in might are the Arch Dukes of Maladomini and Cania, Beelzebub and Mephistopheles, who are equal to greater gods. However, these rankings are only really appropriate when they are not in Hell. Indeed, within their respective "duchies," the Lords of the Nine are virtually omnipotent. Despite suggestions otherwise, not even the gods of Hell are immune to the wills of the Lords. In Stygia, this is very apparent as Prince Leviathan comes closer and closer to all out war with the gods Set and Sekolah due to his insistence on tributes, tithes, and taxes. As they have refused, the Prince has slowly begun to shrink their realms. Now, this is not an easy task as two extremely powerful entities are contesting (if it were so simple, His Infernal Highness would have already taken the lands away from the wayward gods), but the fact that it can happen is of major concern to the other gods in Hell. Despite Prince Leviathan's actions, the other Lords of the Nine are not interested in initiating other wars on Hell... at least not right now. In the long forgotten past, enmity with the Lords of the Nine drove both the goblin and orc pantheons from the Pit. No one knows which Lord cast out the two pantheons (although the more recent legends insist it was Asmodeus himself), but such a feat is unimaginable to planars today (it is believed that this banishment from Hell resulted in the war between the orcish and goblin gods). Typically, the Lords of the Nine and the gods have made treaties and pacts. Usually, these treaties bar the Lords from looking within the realms or otherwise interfering with the gods and their petitioners. Of course, these treaties can and will be broken, but aside from Stygia, this is not the norm.

The epitome of the diabolical is The Overlord of Hell. Let it be emphatically stated that no one knows the true name of this obscure being. He has many different titles and at least two known aliases, the best known and most commonly used being that of Asmodeus (and, for simplicity, we will refer to Hell's Master as Asmodeus throughout this treatise). The Arch Fiend stands alone in his station as the only true god among devils and the sole member of Hell's royalty. Asmodeus is the god of devils and devils are his official proxies. They receive power from their connection to him as his "blood" created them. However, he is more than just a god. Despite suggestions that he is a greater power, this does not take into account the fact that Asmodeus governs not just a layer within a plane, but an *entire* plane of existence. The Nine Hells of Perdition are just as infinite as the Mortal Coil. For any being to hold unchallenged mastery since the beginning of Creation of such a vast and powerful plane means that this being would have to be more than even a greater god. At the very least, Asmodeus is an over god. Even the most powerful "normal" god pales in comparison with his might; indeed, there can be no such comparison. It is this power that allows Asmodeus to command the other Lords of the Nine.

Despite the power he wields, Asmodeus is extremely

limited in his mobility. Trapped at the infinite base of Perdition in a pool of his own "blood," Asmodeus' universe-spanning body is unable to leave the confines of Hell. Additionally, he can only generate one avatar on the material plane. Finally, his ability to grant prayers is vastly different from conventional gods. As an over god, he can make even the greatest of his desires reality, yet his unique imprisonment keeps him from exercising a permanent connection with mortals. The worlds in the mortal coil should rejoice at this knowledge.

## The Devils You Know

In many worlds, the question often arises as to where the spirits of the dead go when a mortal passes away. Most worlds accept the premise that the spirits depart for an eternal afterlife in the appropriate reality where they are either awarded or damned for their actions as mortals. Those mortals that engaged in tyranny, strife, and other forms of organized and rationalized evil find themselves reborn in the Fourth Perdition, Phlegethos, where they are guaranteed centuries of torment in the form of the lemure, the lowest form of devil. (This is the norm; there are but a few mortals who find themselves taken directly into the realm of a particular deity. In such situations, the mortal was often a priest or very dedicated worshipper of said deity). Thus, the many worlds that believe that Hell is a punishment for those who committed acts of evil during life do hold a bit of the truth.

There is a little confusion regarding exactly where the lemures emerge. Some sources suggest that they come from the Maggot Pit, a multi-mile "river" comprised entirely of maggots located on the First, Avernus. This misconception stems from the fact that relatively new lemures do indeed emerge from the Maggot Pit by the billions each day. In order to ensure that Avernus is always under the maximum amount of protection in the event of a successful demonic or angelic invasion, newly arrived souls, upon crawling from the Lake of Fire in Phlegethos, instinctively seek out nearby portals that transport them to Avernus. Since relatively few scholars and sages can withstand the supernaturally evil heat of Phlegethos (assuming they could even make it to this vicious layer), most do their research on the first two layers and many witness the horrible sight of lemures dragging themselves from the Maggot Pit. Thus, their studies result in erroneous conclusions.

Mortal souls who find themselves in Phlegethos are there for two reasons. First, this is where the Lake of Fire (also known as the Pit of Flames) is located, and it is from here that the souls crawl. The exact nature of this Lake is unknown, but it is here that both punishment and purification for devils takes place. It is natural, therefore, to expect new arrivals to Hell to appear here. Secondly, the misery and torment that is Phlegethos is usually, in the minds of recent petitioners, the most direct and immediate means to purge what humanity remains in the spirits of the dead mortals. The pain and suffering they will experience here will be unlike anything they went through during their mortal lives, preparing them for ascendancy into devilhood.

Like many petitioners on other Realities, lemures suffer from a severe case of amnesia. They recall nothing of their former lives. This amnesia allows the lemures to be molded into what their diabolical lords wish for them without having to deal with offended egos and such, not



that an offended ego concerns the devils. Stripping newly arrived petitioners of their memories simply accelerates the ability for the lemure to take part in the great mechanism of Hell (however, unlike the rest of Creation, this memory loss is not permanent. Somehow, Asmodeus has found a method to maintain the memories of all new arrivals in Hell. In a few, remote cases, the Dark Lord of Nessus will return the memories to the spirits as they rise in power within the hierarchy of Hell, but this rarely occurs. What happens to all other souls will be discussed within Asmodeus' section). Additionally, all lemures appear identical. It is known that devils can tell one lemure from another, but most other beings seem incapable of doing so.

For untold centuries, there has been debate as to the nature of the next level of devils, the nupperibo. These wretched creatures are barely distinguishable from lemures. Like their lesser brethren, nupperibo are almost shapeless masses of drooping flesh with writhing appendages for arms and elongated bulbs for heads. Also, like lemures, these creatures are the rank and file infantry of Hell, virtually unintelligent with no sense of individuality. Yet, despite their higher ranking in the grand structure compared to lemures, in order to advance into a higher station, a nupperibo must be demoted "back" into a lemure.

This "demotion" is not truly a demotion because a lemure is never "promoted" into a nupperibo. This is because nupperibos are not normal devils. These creatures are the progeny of mysterious entities that once dominated Perdition when devils as they are now known were young. These were the first devils, the result of The Overlord's fall after the sundering of the Circle of Three. As Asmodeus' passing created each level in turn, his essence merged with Hell's. His blood created the maleficareim, the earliest devils. Immensely powerful, these creatures each had powers similar to that of quasi gods. It is from these creatures that the original Lords of the Nine emerged. These original devils, although still considered Asmodeus' children, were imbued with aspects of Hell itself, making them less likely to obey Asmodeus than their younger, underdeveloped common kin. Also known as "hellspawn," the maleficareim fought among their number, each seeking to impose its brand of diabolical order upon the other with the ultimate goal of ruling all of Hell. Many of the hellspawn were destroyed during these internecine wars. However, those that remained grew ever more powerful. Asmodeus, finally aware of his situation for the first time after his fall, decided to deal with his wayward offspring. Asmodeus destroyed scores of hellspawn, although at least the eight most powerful are known to have survived. The remaining eight, far easier to control than legions of similar beings, were ground under the immense might of Asmodeus and became the original Lords of the eight uppermost layers. Those that were destroyed by Asmodeus, as well as by their siblings, were not annihilated, but merged with Hell. Yet, because of their divine status, these hellspawn are always reborn in portions as nupperibos. Unlike the lemures that crawl from the Lake of Fire, nupperibos may emerge anywhere across Hell. These creatures then seek out other nupperibos who are actually fragments of their former being as a hellspawn. Over time, these nupperibos "mature" and merge, becoming once again one of the mighty hellspawn. Uninterested in dealing with any more conflict than necessary, Asmodeus taught the other Lords the means to re-

form all nupperibos into lemures before they transform into hellspawn. This ensures that Asmodeus only has to deal with a few powerful, treacherous beings in his land rather than legions. Still, it is likely that a few hellspawn have managed to reform. It is known that in the tunnels and caverns of Malbolge the Sixth, a creature powerful enough to give even pit fiends pause exists, a being rumored to predate devils. Additionally, there are frozen creatures in a few icebergs in Stygia the Fifth. These creatures are almost certainly members of the hellspawn race. Do not think, however, that Asmodeus is unaware of their existence. It is likely that he has allowed a few of these creatures to "re-awaken" for some reason. If and how these creatures interact with the hierarchy of Hell is unknown.

At any rate, this is the reason for the bizarre relationship between lemures and nupperibos and the reason why both spirits are extremely similar. The nupperibos, however, in no way stem from petitioner souls and lemures are never "promoted" to nupperibos. It is unclear how many devils know the truth regarding the nupperibos. It is likely that most if not all pit fiends know and it is probable that all of the Courtiers of Perdition know as well.

Beyond these two pitiful creatures is the next class of devils, the spinagon. Small and impish, these cowardly creatures are weak compared to all other devils. However, it is here in the form of the spinagon that devils begin the practice of misinformation and lies. Progression to the next level is typically based upon two things: how the relatively weak spinagon manages to keep alive and how it manages to avoid appearing weak and cowardly despite the truth of this nature. Those that succeed typically exhibit a certain level of craftiness and/or patience with their status and a willingness to take risks are generally promoted to the status of white squamugon. Those who fail are often either left as spinagons, demoted to a bezekiras (hellcat) for those who show craftiness but no willingness to take risks, or promoted to a barbazu for those willing to take risks but are too stupid to realize the danger to their immortal lives.

The time in which a devil exists as a squamugon is when it firsts begins to test its capacity to tempt mortals. The squamugon caste is composed of five distinct sub-ranks. The few spinagons promoted to squamugon rank begin as white squamugons, the lowest rank. From here, as a squamugon proves its ability to tempt the most intelligent and charismatic mortals into Perdition, it receives promotions through four additional colors: red, blue, green, and black. As the ranks change, so too does the squamugon's actual color. It is obvious that the ranks are some kind of inversion of the five major chromatic dragon species. Indeed, for centuries, it was assumed that the so-called "scaly devils" were related to dragons and to the Queen of Dragon, Tiamat. So far as the research completed for this text could uncover, any such relationship is no different from that currently enjoyed by lesser devils and Tiamat: nothing. Of course, if there is some kind of an association, it is so well obscured as to be invisible to most scholars. Another matter to note about squamugons is that they are typically limited to certain Perditions due to their rank; however, in order to progress, they must spend time in each Hell, becoming intimately aware of all the opportunities that await them should they prove successful in their endeavors (or the horrors that are around the corner should they fail to meet Hell's objectives). Upon reaching the status of



black, the squamugon has successfully damned almost two score mortals to Perdition. Many black squamugon serve the will of Princess Glasya and Arch Duke Disparter and are assigned a certain quota of souls to corrupt in order to hope to move to one of the next ranks. An equal number enter the Legions of Hell wherein they serve in minor leadership roles.

The rank of barbazus is considered a dead-end to any spinagon hoping to reach the level of pit fiend some day. Barbazus are the shock-troops of the Legions and are known for their reckless, almost chaotic combat behavior. They are extremely vile and dangerous, often killing simply for sport. However, barbazus often serve as bodyguards to cornugons and barregon, giving some of the more intelligent and enterprising creatures an opportunity to gain their infernal master's attention.

The ranks of erinyes, hamatula, and osyluth are roughly equal in Hell although each plays a different role. The erinyes are the chief soul gatherers for Hell after the Courtiers of Perdition. The hamatulas are the scouts and patrols of Hell, spending their existence tracking lost petitioners and mortals. The osyluths are the police and agents of Hell, often wielding great personal authority to punish other devils for infractions. These three ranks are all extremely significant to most devils for a number of reasons. Although sages have related specific powers and abilities to these ranks, it is known that devils in these ranks often develop the ability to learn new powers specific to their roles. Thus, it is not unusual to find an erinyes with additional enchantment powers or even the ability to cast such spells as an enchanter. Furthermore, these entities find that they are given the opportunity to function on their own without constant and direct supervision. Although hamatula are restricted to a certain level unless given official leave to move elsewhere, osyluths may travel to any level except Nessus as they please in pursuit of their goals while the envious erinyes may travel to the material plane or Endless Boundary at will so long as they have pre-existing clearance to do so. In addition, it is during their time in these ranks that definitive personalities take root. Prior to these ranks, the personality of devils is heavily dependant upon their rank rather than on their past deeds; all barbazus are generally vicious brutes. In these ranks, devils regain many of their mortal talents and interests, although few of their mortal memories. It is from one of these three ranks that most greater devils emerge.

The cornugons are the lowest ranked of the greater devils despite the fact that they are physically more powerful than the barregon. The cornugons are best compared to mayors or low ranking army officers, often commanding battalions of devils and other diabolical creatures while in turn answering to either a gelugon or a pit fiend. These terrifying beasts are often sent out to the Mortal Coil to punish powerful mortals who have slighted hell in some fashion.

The barregons are strange devils in every sense of the word. Like the nupperibos, the barregons follow a bizarre promotion track. It is not possible for a barregon to be promoted to a gelugon without first being demoted to a cornugon. Parallels between barregons and nupperibos are to be expected and a few scholars suspect that barregons are a higher level form of matured maleficareim who have not united completely. It is known that these creatures hate pit fiends and that they are almost more loyal to the Lord of the Fifth, His Infernal Highness Prince Leviathan, than they are to the other Lords of the

Nine. The true nature of the barregon is unknown and, until Asmodeus decides to reveal his goals with these creatures, their nature will probably remain elusive.

The gelugons are the equivalent in power to colonels and governors in the Mortal Coil while serving as mighty guards to the Courtiers of Perdition. These frigid, alien creatures typically keep to Cania, rarely venturing beyond. They are also very likely to become engaged in "extracurricular" pursuits like learned magic or thieving abilities. While all the other greater devil ranks have internal rankings, gelugons do not. All gelugons are equal in rank and responsibility, at least superficially. This does not mean that all gelugons are equally talented, however. The rationale for this arrangement allows the Dark Ministry and the Courtiers of Perdition to assess which gelugons within this apparently even power structure are able to assume leadership roles among their peers. For a gelugon, it is the power of persuasion, intellect, and charisma that allows one to stand out from its peers; in addition, perfectly fulfilling orders, responsibilities, and revealing ingenuity increases a gelugon's potential to be offered a promotion to pit fiend rank. Like cornugons, there appears to be relatively little betrayal within this rank, probably due to the fact that a gelugon is expected to behave as if it is equal in every way to its peers without actually being equal. If a gelugon serves in this capacity for 666 years (or 999 depending on who is asked), it is taken to the Lake of Fire in which it bathes for 1001 days. Upon emerging from the excruciating pain of the Lake of Fire, the spirit emerges as the dreaded pit fiend.

Pit fiends are among the most feared of underworld entities. Aside from squamugon and erinyes, pit fiends interact with mortals in a non-violent fashion (most times) more than any other devils. They are responsible for the steady supply of mortal souls to Hell, the maintenance of the workings of Hell as it pertains to mortals, and representing Hell when interacting with other entities of similar power. Pit fiends are comparable to generals on the Prime, commanding vast armies of lesser fiends while at the same time beholden to the will of Hell's nobility and royalty.

Like the erinyes, hamatula, osyluth, and all greater devils, pit fiends are very likely to concentrate in certain fields of interests during their immortal lives. Many are accomplished wizards and quite a few have honed their skills as fighters. Perhaps more than any other power associated with pit fiends, their ability to alter reality with their *wish* makes them a force to be reckoned with. The intelligence exhibited by pit fiends, their eons of contemplating existence, and their direct link to the cosmic generally allows them to ask for and to provide *wishes* that suit their desires. Thus, many pit fiends have used their *wishes* to make themselves even more powerful. Pit fiends like Gazra and Ariyan, and the members of the Dark Ministry are examples of pit fiends who have grown in might over the duration of their long existence through "natural" means, like training, and the judicious use of *wish*. However, many scholars now suspect that the nature of the *wish* ability is not entirely tied to the pit fiend but may be directly related to Asmodeus himself. These scholars point to the fact that there are many extremely old pit fiends who have not gained any significant power over the course of their lives. These scholars suspect that the ability for a pit fiend to advance is dependent on how well they impress Asmodeus and that it is he who ultimately determines the success of the *wish*.

Among the pit fiends, some of the most powerful are the eight members of the Dark Ministry. While there are known to be pit fiends of comparable power, the Dark Ministry possesses a number of political components that sets its members above all other pit fiends. First, the Dark Ministry controls the Legions of Hell. They have the ability to strip any other Devil, lesser ranked pit fiends included, of their commands and their troops' loyalty. Second, the Dark Ministry maintains close ties to the Courtiers of Perdition. Indeed, many Courtiers of Perdition were at one point in time in the Dark Ministry and continue to show an interest in that coven of pit fiends. Finally, the Dark Ministry answers directly to Asmodeus. This, perhaps more than anything, establishes the Dark Ministry as the greatest of pit fiends. Asmodeus meets with the Dark Ministry four times a year, not so much to dictate to them how to gather more souls, but to ensure they believe he is supportive of their efforts in the *Blood War*.

There are many other kinds of devils in Hell. Recently, some scholars, in an effort to simplify the taxonomy related to the diabolical, have taken to calling the better known devils "baatezu." "Baatezu" is a term that usually, but not always, refers to those devils that are part of the general chain of command within the Legions of Hell. There are other devils (some still with the "baatezu" title) that exist beyond the traditional command structure of Hell. At this date, so little is known of these devils that they are not included in this treatise... but they do exist and they are very dangerous. In the end, all common devils answer to the Dark Ministry.

### The Courtiers of Perdition

The Courtiers of Perdition, also known as the "Peers," "Peerage of Perdition," or "Powers of Hell," are the various nobles and high ranking officers who are part of the Courts of Hell. Thus, there are a fair number of pit fiends, exceptionally powerful half-fiends, and a sprinkling of non-devilish, diabolical beings among the Courts. On the other hand, there are quite a few extremely powerful devils who are not Courtiers of Perdition.

First and foremost, there are no devils of rank lower than pit fiend within the Courtiers of Perdition. Although powerful gelugons, cornugons, and even barragon serve as bodyguards and attendants to pit fiend generals and Dukes of Hell, these beings are too lowly to achieve any recognition within the Courts. When a gelugon or cornugon achieves some great success that merits a place in the Courts, that being is always promoted to pit fiend status for at least 99 years before an official invitation to join a Court is offered. Still, many Dukes of Hell (but never pit fiend Courtiers) do bring greater devil attendees to Court to reflect their status among their peers. To be selected to stand beside a Duke at Court is both a tremendous honor and a great threat. On the one hand, a cornugon attendee has proven its worth, power, and intellect in order to draw the attention of a Duke of Hell; this becomes a clear indication of quick advancement in the hierarchy. On the other hand, the cornugon then has to worry about embarrassing not only his Duke by failure to adhere to some subtle from of protocol, but embarrassing another Courtier in the midst of a meeting, which may well result in the cornugons immediate reduction in status. Still, most greater devils are eager to

attend any high level meetings with Courtiers and, in the vast majority of cases, such devils are too intelligent to risk disclosing classified information, knowing that the hoarding of such knowledge only reaps greater power in the long run, not to mention a longer existence.

Pit fiends who are part of the Courtiers of Perdition are those who serve a Lord of the Nine or a Duke of Hell. These pit fiends are distinguished from those that serve within the Legions of Hell under the Dark Ministry. Although the Dark Ministers are without question the most powerful pit fiends involved with the *Blood War*, the Dark Ministry is not considered part of the Courtiers of Perdition. Likewise, the Governors like Ariyan and Gazra are not considered Courtiers since they too are part of the Legions of Hell. Governors who are appointed to their positions by the Dark Ministry are, like their Ministers, "commoners" in that they serve the needs of Hell rather than the lofty, specific goals of a Duke or Lord of Hell. Still, there is some overlap with the Dark Ministry, Governors, and few other high-ranking pit fiend generals. It is almost unheard of for Gazra not to be invited to appear at the Court of Belial during important meetings between the Phlegethan Dukes, and the Dark Ministers are always present when the Infernal Court meets in Malsheem.

Most of these pit fiends who are officially part of a Court of Perdition served within the Legions of Hell at one point or another and distinguished themselves in their roles. Upon being invited into the Courts of Perdition, a pit fiend is typically granted some manner of title, baron or earl being the most common. They are now part of the lowest rung of diabolical nobility. As a whole, pit fiends that join the Courtiers of Perdition are part of some Infernal Knightly Order. The roles of pit fiends within the Courts of Perdition are varied, but – with the exception of those that serve within the Court of Bael – there is very little in the way of martial activity. For example, the pit fiends that serve the Court of Dis tend to war against those who value ethics, hard work, and integrity in business, while those that serve the will of Mammon are dedicated to battling against the acts of financial charity and generosity. Thus, the wars fought by pit fiend Courtiers are more esoteric and cerebral in nature than those fought in the *Blood War* and are meant to increase not only the number of souls damned to eternal torment in Hell, but to ensure that the Realms Above and the Realities of Chaos lose any potential prizes among mortals.

All Dukes of Hell are part of the Courtiers of Perdition. Each Duke (of which there are believed to be 81, or 9 for each Perdition) maintains his, her, or its own responsibilities within a given Court and most often maintain their own smaller courts in their demesnes. The Dukes of Hell all represent some fundamental aspect related to the overarching principle governing the Perdition they serve. Thus, while all Dukes of Avernus are warlords after a fashion, Abigor represents misplaced honor, a love for violence, and strategic genius while Malphas represents the intellectual pursuits related to combat success and superiority. Of course, the Dukes all vie for greater authority within a given Court and all Courts boast one or sometimes two Dukes who clearly outshine the others.

The Dukes are simultaneously more accessible than the Lords of the Nine and more shadowy. Mortals are very familiar with the Lords of the Nine as these beings have, through no desire of their own, become embedded



in mortal consciousness across Creation. Many powerful mortals have tried to summon the Lords to accomplish some service, a ploy virtually impossible to achieve for any but the most powerful mortal. One reason for this is because if one attempts to summon a Lord (or, in some cases, an arch-devil) to the material plane, he will end up summoning a Duke of Hell that best fits the goals/needs/requests of the summoner. Due to the fact that it takes so long to successfully casting a summoning spell, a Duke typically knows well in advance that such a request is coming and can usually find the means to either make itself available at the probable time of successful summons, or can send a pit fiend or some lower ranking devil to meet with the would-be summoner prior to the end of the summons. Thus, the Duke of Hell is significantly less well known than a Lord because they are so infrequently called to the material plane successfully. On the other hand, it is often a Duke of Hell that orchestrates and fulfills contracts signed by mortals and other beings, although in most cases this is done behind the scenes.

Scattered in status among the pit fiend nobles and the Dukes of Hell (and sometimes Grand Dukes of Hell) are the various half-fiends and powerful non-diabolical beings who have impressed the Lords of the Nine. Half-fiends invited to join the Courts of Perdition are sometimes the offspring of a Duke or even Lord, but a fair number are the children of erinyes, fallen angels, gelugons, or pit fiends who exhibited a significant degree of pride and success during their time in the Prime. Due to their tremendous sense of power and overweening arrogance, these half-fiends (or, more rarely, nephilim) have overcome the hatred and distrust the devils typically show them upon their arrival to Hell; indeed, quite a few have to go through quite a bit to prove their worth and typically have to do three times as much as another devil of similar standing. But, once a half-fiend proves herself (and this really depends on the Duke or Lord in question), the especially powerful ones are invited to join the Courts of Perdition. Most are ranked with pit fiends, but the fact that two – Fierana, Grand Duchess of Phlegethos and Lady of the Fourth, and Lixer, Infernal Prince and Heir to the Serpent's Throne – have achieved virtual Lord status reveals that there is always room for a truly despicable and powerful half-fiend at all levels of Hell save royalty itself.

Likewise, beings like illithids, powerful undead, and dragons are found among the Courts of Perdition. These beings, often more powerful than pit fiends, typically compete with Dukes in every way save title, and tend to directly serve a Lord of the Nine. Like half-fiend Courtiers, such creatures have to prove their value to Hell and are often the targets of elaborate schemes to at least ruin their reputations if not kill them. It is interesting to note that most diabolical, non-diabolical creatures among the Courts tend to serve "devils true" rather than the Fallen. It seems that the Fallen, despite their obvious evil, still perceive beings like blue dragons and illithids as dangerous, untrustworthy scum.

While all Dukes of Hell are part of the Courtiers of Perdition, most arch-devils are not. Due to some odd rationale, most Arch-Devils are exiles from Hell. A fair number of arch-devils were former Lords themselves and are, as a result, threats to the current Hierarchy of Hell. Quite a few exiled arch-devils are among the Fallen. Indeed, there have been times when a Duke of Hell was promoted to arch-devil status and promptly exiled from

Hell with no apparent reason. Still, there are arch-devils within the Courts and many of these beings outrank the Dukes of Hell not only in sheer power, but in official title as well. Most such arch-devils are given the title Grand Duke of Hell and all directly serve a Lord of the Nine.

The Lords of the Nine are the pinnacle of the Courtiers of Perdition. Indeed, they actually create another rank within the Courtiers known as the Procession of Perdition. The Procession of Perdition includes the Lords of the Nine and the Heirs of Hell (Glasya and Lixer), and there are rumors that there are two additional "nameless" members of the Procession, bringing the number to 13. Asmodeus does not count among the Procession as he is the only member of Hell's royalty (neither Glasya nor Lixer are accorded this recognition). The Lords of the Nine, however, clearly outstrip the Heirs of Hell in virtually every way, including rank; however, the Lords are cautious when dealing with the Heirs of Hell as to offend or threaten one of them could mean fierce and final retaliation from The Overlord for offense rather than any real threat to his station. The Lords of the Nine dictate the nature of the Courts of Perdition as well as their own inner circles. The Lords jealously guard their stations, knowing full well that they can be replaced by another if they are not cautious.

The Lords hate each other, but there are alliances within this august body. Currently, there are three groups among the Lords. There is what scholars refer to as the "classic Lords," or those who have always been Lords and are "Devils True;" Mephistopheles and Dispater are the only two remaining among this group and, if devils can count on each other, these two are probably the closest knit pair among the Lords. The second group consists of the Fallen and they are actively opposed to the "classic Lords;" Beelzebub and Belial are the two remaining members of this group and, while not as closely allied as Mephistopheles and Dispater, they are willing to send aid to each other. The final group is the "unallied." The "unallied" Lords are those who are either new to the role or are distrusted/hated by their peers. Bael, Mammon, Leviathan, and Lilith are the "unallied."

Many scholars believe that eventually both Bael and Lilith will join with the "classic Lords." Bael, although risen from pit fiend rank and having stolen Lordship from another, is a true devil; furthermore, he revealed a great deal of cleverness and trickery in his success at the expense of a Fallen. Lilith, having been an original Lord of the Nine, is currently reorganizing Malbolge to her liking; once the reorganization is complete, she is certain to reenter Infernal politics with full fervor. In the past, she was at enmity with Mephistopheles and Dispater, but since she has to choose between true devils and fallen angels, she is almost certain to select former enemies over charlatans.


Mammon and Leviathan are almost guaranteed to never take up with any group. Mammon, a former ally to Mephistopheles and Dispater, brazenly betrayed them both during the *Dies Irae*, accused them of turning against Asmodeus, and has stolen a great deal of wealth from both. Neither trusts him and both are trying to determine the best way to avenge themselves against him. Conversely, Mammon hates the Fallen and wants nothing to do with them unless material wealth is involved. Leviathan, having always been at enmity with Mephistopheles and Dispater, is likewise hated and distrusted by the other Lords. Leviathan has sworn to destroy all of





# Chapter One: Beyond the Gates of Hell


them for their roles in his imprisonment; furthermore, he has alarmed his peers – including Mephistopheles – with his vocal goal to overthrow Asmodeus. This alone has isolated him more than anything else.


## Breakdown of the Nine Perditions


 **Avernus:** War, Corrupted Honor, Violence, Genocide. A place of eternal warfare, this is a layer that caters to those who believe that the violence in which they partake will lead to a utopia, when in fact their violence and evil results in tyranny and the death of those outside of the "Grand Order" of Hell. Warmongering fascists.


 **Dis:** Corrupted Ethics, Stagnation, Sloth, Elitists. A place of endless, meaningless toil that never changes. Those at the top benefit from the work of those at the bottom. Imagine a faceless corporation in an iron skyscraper with a CEO you never see doing anything, but still reaps from your work. Think extreme, evil communism.


 **Minauros:** Greed, Avarice, Envy. A place where one never has enough and always expects to take your piece of the pie. This is the personification of a tax-hungry State that always has two hands in your purse. And, after they take your money, they take your possessions, your car, and your significant other. They evict you from your home shortly before the last payment's due, sighting obscure language in the mortgage. Then, when you're almost destitute, they offer everything back to you at a reduced premium.


 **Phlegethos:** Pain, Suffering, Physical Oppression, Fire. This is "quintessential Hell." A place of eternal suffering and torment, both physical and spiritual. It is also a place in which gross matter is tortured and oppressed for the perverse needs of those in power. This is best represented by societies in which a person has no control over his/her body; people are told what to wear, how and what to eat, and when and with whom they can mate.

 **Stygia:** Traitors, Gluttony, Dissatisfaction, Ignorance, Water. This is a place in which no one trusts anyone because everyone perceives others as stepping stones. No one is satisfied with their station... especially because one's station is always below another's. You forget love, help, dedication, or commitment; indeed, you're ignorant of such concepts because you haven't experienced it here.

 **Malbolge:** Corrupt Nature. This is where Nature has been turned on its head for the benefit of tyranny. Nature serves the needs of those in power; who cares if you pollute if you can make a profit? Who cares if children, a race's future, are forced to work and die if you benefit?

 **Maladomini:** Pride. Perfection. Intrigue. Arrogance. This is a place in which not one word uttered goes unnoticed. Big Brother is everywhere because Big Brother knows how you should live your life. There is an eternal buzzing as everything you do is reported to those in command, those with the perfect plans for everyone's lives.

 **Cania:** Corrupt Knowledge. Contempt. Careless Stoicism (neither empathy nor sympathy). Cold. Here the only thing of value is knowledge, even if that knowledge would spell the end of Creation. Knowledge is power, it is the only thing that fires the soul. All else is meaningless and worthless. Of course, you don't care too much since there is nothing but knowledge to care about.

 **Nessus:** Damnation. Power. Lost Knowledge. Tyranny. Darkness. Oppression. Here, all the lies and terrors of Hell are fermented into true Lawful Evil: Damnation. Here, there is only one power and under that power all *will* kneel. Here, knowledge and wisdom are hoarded by those in power for no one else is worthy to know anything. No one – save The Overlord – has the right to determine the course of anything, much less their own lives. You are fodder for Hell -- if that at all --